

## Historicity of the Bible New Testament

### Manuscript evidence:

- The New Testament has better manuscript support than any other ancient text.
- There are approximately 5,000 copies of Greek manuscripts, 8000 copies of the Vulgate. Most of these are from 250-400 AD.
- The dates of the earliest fragment of a Gospel, is from the Gospel of John, dated to about AD 100-125.
- This is well before many liberal scholars had dated the Gospel of John.
- In general, the dates of the Gospels can easily be argued as dated AD 70. This is important as the sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple occurred at that time.
- Even many liberal scholars date the Gospels as prior to AD 70.
- Luke/Acts ends prior to the death of Paul, which would have not been likely to have been omitted, which dates it in the mid 60's.

### Other Historical Documents: (for comparison)

- Other ancient texts are incomplete for the most part, and may have at best 20 copies, dated 700-1400 years after the fact.
- These typically have sizeable portions missing.

<u>Author</u>	<u>When Written</u>	<u>Earliest Copy</u>	<u>Time Span</u>	<u># Copies</u>
Caesar	100-44 BC	900 AD	1000 yrs	10
Aristotle	c. 350 BC	1100 AD	1400 yrs	5 (of any 1 work)
Tacitus	100 AD	1100 AD	1000 yrs	20

### Historicity of the New Testament:

- The Gospels are written as narrative, consistent with other historical documents of the time.
- Other historical documents from this age frequently engage in moralizing or other messaging.
- They do not show legendary development as do the later apocryphal gospels.
- The Gospels are not actually the oldest documents in the Bible.
- The Pauline letters in general were written prior to the Gospels.
- They quote early creeds/hymns such as 1 Tim 3:16, 1 Cor 11:23, 1 Cor 15:3, Rom 1:3-4.

**Historicity of the Resurrection:**

- The persecution, death by crucifixion, burial, empty tomb and resurrection appearances can be argued as historical events.
- These events can be viewed from the Biblical sources as well as extra-Biblical sources.

**Historicity of the Resurrection-Death by Crucifixion (Sources external to the Bible):**

- The 4 Gospels describe the Crucifixion.
- He was scourged (beaten severely with a whip that tore the flesh off of his back) prior to the Crucifixion.
- He was mocked, a crown of thorn placed on him, and he was beaten.
- He needed assistance in carrying the cross.
- He was Crucified at Golgotha, the place of the skull.
- He was in very bad physical condition by the time he was nailed to the cross.
- The Gospels state that he was Crucified under Pontius Pilate, as does Acts, and other writings in the new testament.
- Jewish leaders judged that Jesus was guilty of apostasy (Talmud, Apocryphon of John).
- According to the Talmud, Jesus was sentenced to die, and a herald was sent forth to invite anyone to speak on his behalf. None did.
- He was put to death as a result of his teachings (Talmud, Lucian-Greek satirist)
- Died at the hands of Pontius Pilate(Tacitus).
- By crucifixion (Josephus, Talmud, Lucian, Gospel of Truth, Acts of Pilate).
- During the reign of Tiberius (Tacitus, Phlegon).
- Occurring on Passover Eve (Talmud).
- Being nailed to a cross (Phlegon, Gospel of Truth, Acts of Pilate, Tacitus).
- His garments were gambled for (Acts of Pilate).
- Darkness for 3 hours (Thallus, Phlegon).
- Earthquakes (Phlegon).
- Mara Bar-Serapion (Syrian who wrote a letter in 1st to 3rd century) notes that Jesus was executed unjustly and God judged the Jews.

**Historicity of the Resurrection-The Burial:**

- The Gospels indicate that Joseph of Arimathaea approached Pontius Pilate to obtain the body for burial.
- Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin.
- There is only one burial story. No other competing stories were extant at the time.
- 1 Cor 15:3-8 is a very early creed of the church.

**Historicity of the Resurrection-The Empty Tomb:**

- All 4 Gospels indicate that the tomb was in fact empty.
- Matthew describes the first official response, which was that the disciples stole him when the guards were asleep.

- Early Jewish writings accuse the disciples of stealing the body or other theories. ALL Of them assume that the tomb was empty.
- The body was in fact, never found.
- The 4 Gospels have the appearance of 4 independent attestations, rather than 1 account copied 4 times.
- The fact that women are noted in all 4 gospels to have found the tomb, serves as an argument for the reliability of the accounts.
- The testimony of women was not considered valid in 1st century Palestine.
- This would be viewed as an embarrassment, and would not have been used to fabricate an argument.
- The Gospels record the apostle's skepticism about the women's story, and they wanted to verify the information for themselves.
- Thomas' skepticism is recorded.
- Peter's sermon in Act's 2 preaches the bodily resurrection, and therefore the empty tomb.

#### **Historicity of the Resurrection-The Resurrection Appearances:**

- The oldest manuscript about the resurrection comes from the Pauline letters, especially 1 Corinthians 15.
- In versus 1-8, Paul clearly outlines that he had been given the information that Christ died for our sins according to scripture and that he was raised from the dead, according to scriptures.
- Paul notes that appeared to Peter, the 12, more than 500 brethren at the SAME TIME, James, and then all the apostles, and lastly to Paul himself.
- The Gospel narratives (even excluding Mark 16 verse 9 cf) clearly indicate that Jesus appeared physically.
- Note the narratives where he ate with them, and the interaction with Thomas.
- In short, the entire narrative of the resurrection describes a bodily resurrection that would have been easily disprovable.
- The easy way to have argued for a spiritual resurrection which is not verifiable.
- Even the 1 Cor 15 uses the Greek word egeiro which implies being awakened from sleep, getting up...

#### **Historicity of the Resurrection-The Change in the Apostles:**

- After Jesus' arrest, trial and death, the apostles were beaten.
- They did not believe the women who testified to the resurrection.
- They did not believe each other.
- They at first thought Jesus was a ghost and were horrified at his presence.
- Only after being convinced of the truth of the resurrection, did they become willing to stand for His Truth.
- According to what information is available, 11 of the 12 were martyred. John died in exile on Patmos.
- These people had a remarkable transformation. Even skeptical scholars will agree on this point.
- Would they really have been willing to follow to death a man who had told them

bald-faced lies about who he was, and they had all of that blow up on their faces over the course of a few days?

- After Jesus death, they had every reason NOT to believe.
- Charles Colson, the Watergate conspirator noted that his group was a group of well educated, well trained people who had a HUGE interest in keeping their mouths shut and lying about the Watergate break-in. He notes that despite that they could not keep their mouths shut for more than a couple of days once things came to light. Contrast them to the behaviour of the disciples.

### **Historicity of the Resurrection-Extra-Biblical comments:**

- After the death of Jesus, his teachings again broke out in Judea (Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny).
- The Talmud stated that because the disciples were going to steal the body, Judas the gardener reburied it and later sold it to Jewish authorities who then dragged it through the streets Jerusalem.
- Justin Martyr and Tertullian responded with the comment that the Jews paid trained men to go around the Mediterranean to claim the disciples stole the body, as in Mat 28:11-15.
- Josephus records that the disciples believed in the resurrection.
- Phlegon said that Jesus appeared and had the signs of the nails...
- The Treatise on the Resurrection, Gospels of Truth and Thomas also proclaim and defend the resurrection.
- Christians were named after their founder (Tacitus), whose teachings they followed and exercised faith in, and believed in their own immortality and therefore scorned death (Lucian). They had sacred writings that were commonly read, they had common property, and were willing to go to any extent to help others (Lucian and others). They were gullible and easy to exploit (Lucian).
- They met on a particular day for a predawn service that included singing a hymn, worshiped Jesus as God, swore oaths against committing sin, disbanded and reassembled to share food, and officers of the church were mentioned in terms of 2 female deaconesses (Pliny).
- Nero blamed them for the great fire of Rome.
- Pliny outlined in detail a method of identifying, interrogating, sometimes tortured and then executed.
- If a person denied that they were a Christian, by declaring Caesar was God, they were spared as Pliny noted that no believer would ever be guilty of such a denial of Christ.
- In addition to all of the non-believers comments, we have documentation from the early church fathers such as Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, that date from 95-150 AD, and frequently sound like one of the creeds or confessions.

### **Historicity of the Resurrection-Closing comments:**

- † A dying and rising Messiah was NOT part of the view of the Messiah in 1st Century Palestine. They were looking for a military king/conqueror ala Judas Maccabees.
- † The Greek philosophies of the day would NOT have supported a bodily resurrection.

They viewed matter as corrupt, and would have been looking for a spiritual resurrection. They would not have WANTED a physical resurrection.